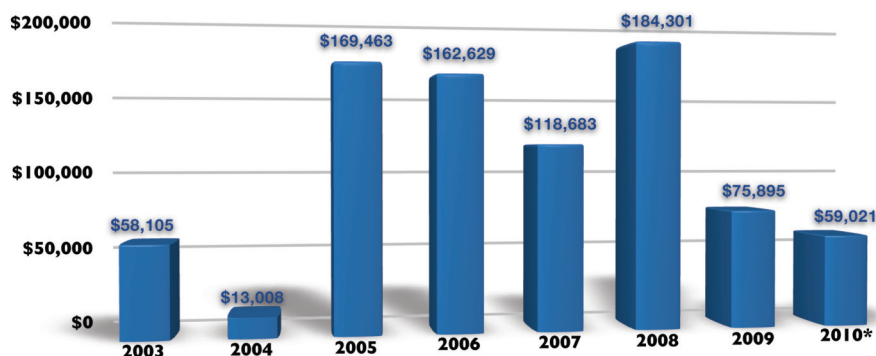




1910 • HIGHLAND CENTENNIAL • 2010

GAZEBO EXPRESS

YOUR COMMUNITY NEWS AND EVENT SOURCE FOR THE TOWN OF HIGHLAND • FEBRUARY 2010



PROPERTY TAX TOLL: NEARLY \$1 MILLION AND COUNTING

Town residents paid nearly \$800,000 in interest over the last seven years on money borrowed to keep government running until property taxes could be collected and distributed. The cost of financing such loans is expected to be about \$60,000 this year.

Town Council President Mark Herak said those funds were dollars that could have been better used to provide services to residents.

“Our intention is always to make the best use of every penny we receive,” Herak said. “Unfortunately, when property tax bills were delayed for so long and over a period of so many years, we had no choice but to borrow money to keep the town running.”

Prior to 2003, the Town Council and Clerk-Treasurer Michael Griffin worked for a period of years to reduce annual borrowing that had a dual benefit -- interest income instead of interest payments. That plan had to be scrapped when property tax bills were mailed more than a year late and the county decided against issuing provisional tax bills. The interim bills would have provided an infusion of cash to help pay day-to-day

expenses, such as salaries for personnel, utility bill payments, road salt and gas.

Without the property tax cash, the town was forced to apply for a loan.

“Depending on the department, 60 to 90 percent of the revenues I need to pay for operations comes from property tax or money borrowed while waiting for property tax payments to arrive,” Griffin said. “Every time we borrow, we pay interest in some amount; money that is not available for some other purpose.”

At its regular meeting Jan. 25, the Town Council approved a resolution appealing to state lawmakers for legislative changes they believe will help Highland and surrounding communities going forward.

The resolution asks the state’s elected leaders to review the most desirable practices of neighboring states regarding the issue of estimated property tax bills and make changes to Indiana law to streamline the process.

The council also requests that the General Assembly take action during its spring legislative session and that rule changes become effective for property taxes due this year.

PROMPT AMBULANCE CONTRACT EXTENDED

Prompt Ambulance will continue to provide 911 service for medical emergencies.

The Town Council approved a three-year, no-fee contract extension at its regular meeting Jan. 25.

Prompt has been providing paramedic-based pre-hospital care for medical emergencies in Highland since 2004, when the town partnered with Munster to negotiate the original contract.

In endorsing the contract extension, Councilman Bernie Zemen said he has been pleased with the service provided to the community.

“Prompt has done a wonderful job for us,” he said. “I look forward to continuing this relationship for the next three years.”

CADDY ON THE BLOCK

The town is putting its 1997 Cadillac DeVille up for sale.

The luxury car was seized and later forfeited after the courts found it was used to commit a crime.

The town’s portion of the proceeds from the sale will be deposited in the Traffic and Law Violations Agency Fund.

The vehicle will be sold by sealed bids, which should be forwarded to Town Hall.

FOR MORE INFO: Contact the Clerk-Treasurer’s office at (219) 838-1080.

HIGHLAND COUNCIL ELECTS NEW OFFICERS

Councilman Mark Herak and Konnie Kuiper will lead the Town Council during this, its centennial year.

Herak will serve as Town Council president, replacing Councilman Dan Vassar while Kuiper will serve as vice president, replacing Councilman Brian Novak.



WARD 1

BERNIE ZEMEN
bzemen@comcast.net
(219) 781-1056



WARD 2

MARK HERAK - president
mherak@highland.in.gov
(219) 838-0126



WARD 3

DAN VASSAR
dvassar@highland.in.gov
(219) 924-1945



WARD 4

BRIAN NOVAK
bnovak@highland.in.gov
(219) 810-7810



WARD 5

KONNIE KUIPER
vice president
kkuiper@highland.in.gov
(219) 924-7820

MEMORIAL EVENT TO HONOR VETERANS

The town wants to honor all Highland men and women who have served in the military for a special Memorial Day remembrance.

"If you know someone who is in the military or who is a veteran, please send us their names and branch of service," Dawn Wolak said. Deadline for submission is April 30.

TO PARTICIPATE: Email Dawn Wolak at booknutt0910@sbcglobal.net or send information to the Town Hall, 3333 Ridge Road, Highland.

RIVERFRONT DEVELOPMENT DISTRICT DRAWS INVESTORS

Interest is running high from investors hoping to cash in on the town's new Riverfront Development District.

Since receiving approval from the state last year to expand the boundaries of the Riverfront Development area beyond the 1,500 feet typically allowed to such developments, Redevelopment Director Cecile Petro said six restaurant owners and two commercial realtors have sought information about the district and the application process to locate there.

The goal of the district is to encourage entrepreneurship and small business ownership while creating a thriving restaurant/entertainment corridor along Kennedy Avenue and Indianapolis Boulevard.

It took action by the Indiana Alcohol and Tobacco Commission to extend the boundaries of the district south of the Little Calumet River to Strong Street along Kennedy Avenue and to Ridge Road along Indianapolis Boulevard.

The state designation expands the number


LIQUOR LICENSE HELP

The town is offering assistance to restaurateurs in obtaining special three-way liquor licenses for \$1,000 per year. The licenses are specific to locations within the development, are not transferrable and are given only to establishments that are primarily food-based.

FOR MORE INFO: Call Cecile Petro at (219) 972-7598 or email cpetro@highland.in.gov.

of liquor licenses available in town.

"What we will be looking for are upscale entrepreneurial establishments -- such as those that are chef-owned -- which could not afford liquor licenses in today's competitive market," Petro said. "Liquor licenses have become unaffordable to the mom-and-pop entrepreneurs. We want to attract those types of businesses to locate in the new district."

It is unknown how many licenses will be granted. Petro said the Alcohol and Tobacco Commission will have the final say. 


GUIDING HIGHLAND'S FUTURE

Members of the Town Council were delighted at the number of residents who volunteered to serve on a board or commission for 2010.

Dozens of residents applied to donate their time to making Highland better.

"We were absolutely thrilled with the number of quality applicants who applied for these positions after reading in the Gazebo Express that we were looking for citizens who wanted to take part in their government," Councilman Dan Vassar said. "Too often we hear that no one can find the time to volunteer. We had dozens of individuals who did just that and I would like to personally thank everyone who applied."

After interviewing all applicants, the council has selected new representatives for nearly every board and commission.

Vassar said all applications will be kept on file for possible appointment in 2011. 

2010 APPOINTMENTS

Board of Zoning Appeals

Vern Sieb

Parks and Recreations Board

Ed Dabrowski

Police Commission

Dan Stombaugh and Andrew Hein

Redevelopment Commission

Dominic Noce, Greg Kuzmar, Tom Crowel, Michael Maloney and Bridget DeYoung

Water Board

Gerald McMahon

Board of Sanitary Commissioners

Mark Knesek

Council of Community Events

Liz Breslin, John Breslin and Lisa Gauthier were selected to serve four-year terms. Rose James, Brandon Wolak, Ellen Jasin, Ericka Rozenich, Bob Benham, Kim Kosmas and Vern Sieb were selected to serve one-year terms.

HIGHLAND GROVE ACCIDENTS DRIVING CHANGE AT THE MALL

A request by two women involved in an accident at the south exit of Highland Grove Mall along Main Street will likely mean changes for traffic along the heavily traveled retail corridor.

Barbara Furman of Hammond and Suzette Bodnar of Avondale, Arizona were struck by a car exiting the mall parking lot last year.

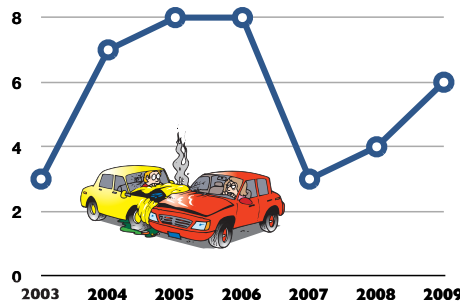
Operating on a recommendation from the Traffic Safety Commission, the Town Council asked public works and police to work together to determine the cost and avenues to pay for concrete medians or another traffic control device on Main Street to prohibit traffic from entering the mall from eastbound Main Street or exiting mall parking heading east on Main Street.

The exit closest to the Target store has been an issue of concern for a number of years. Between 2003 and 2009, 39 accidents were logged at the location.

Since 2007, there has been a plan in place that would have provided a fix. That was before the nation's economic woes took a toll on the planned Lifestyle Center, which was slated for construction south of Main Street

A HISTORY OF ACCIDENTS

Since 2003, 39 accidents have been logged at the south exit of Highland Grove Mall at Main Street.



in Schererville.

The developer had agreed to install a traffic light at the location when the retail development was complete. The Schererville mall and Highland Grove exits on Main Street would have been aligned.

Because that development has not moved forward, Police Chief Pete Hojnicky, who is chairman of the Traffic Safety Commission, said it is time Highland takes proactive steps to make the intersection safer.

COUNCIL JOINS FIGHT FOR CLINE

Members of the Town Council are asking Gov. Mitch Daniels to rethink a plan to permanently close the Cline Avenue extension in East Chicago.

The elevated structure was completed in 1986 as a direct artery connecting Chicago and the heavily industrialized northern corridor of Northwest Indiana.

The bridge was closed last year after transportation officials found corrosion on the elevated spans. At that time, the state promised to renovate the structure only to later decide traffic counts didn't justify the expense of the project.

Highland officials are joining others in the region to tell the state they have misjudged the importance of the thoroughfare.

In a resolution passed Jan. 25, the Council

said the road represents a vital link to Northwest Indiana's heavy manufacturers that line the Lake Michigan shore as well as the riverboat casinos, which provide a major influx of cash for the region and state. In addition, the road provides convenient access to the Gary Chicago Airport.

The resolution will be sent to the governor, state lawmakers and transportation officials.

"It is important for all of Northwest Indiana that the state reconsider this decision and appropriate the necessary resources to rebuild the Cline Avenue bridge," Council President Mark Herak said. "The road was scheduled for a \$90-million rebuild in 2012. There is no reason the state can't take that project, expedite it and get the roadway rebuilt."

RESCUERS RESPOND TO WINTER SCARE

An astute resident walking his dog atop the Little Calumet River dike saw a hole in the ice with a baseball cap next to it and did exactly what he was supposed to do: He called 911.

Fire, police and public works employees sprang into action. In minutes, rescue personnel were at the scene. Fire Chief Bill Timmer said they saw what the resident saw -- snowmobile tracks and an ominous hole in the ice.

"While Fire Department personnel evaluated the situation and initiated the rescue, we had help from Public Works following the tracks away from the scene," he said. "At the same time, Public Works started clearing a path to help us at the scene."

While that was going on, the snowmobiler on the river had been located - minus a cap - but safe and sound.

"Thankfully, there was a very good outcome in this situation," Timmer said. "We have done this drill so many times and everything worked like it was supposed to. We have a great team that works to help anyone in town in need."

CENSUS BUREAU SEEKS PART-TIME WORKERS

The federal government is looking for residents who would like to help with 2010 census.

According to the bureau, "These temporary, part-time jobs offer good pay, flexible evening and weekend hours and the chance to work near home."

TO APPLY: Call (866) 861-2010 or visit www.2010censusjobs.gov.

NEWS TIP? STORY IDEA?

GAZEBO EXPRESS
c/o Highland Town Hall
3333 Ridge Road
Highland, IN 46322
gazeboexpress@gmail.com

AROUNDTOWN

PLAY BALL!

Little League and Youth Softball 2010 registration continues in February.

HIGHLAND LITTLE LEAGUE RULES:

- Players **MUST** turn 4 by April 30, 2010 to be eligible to play.
- Players **MUST** reside in Highland.
- **NEW** Players **MUST** provide Birth Certificate & Proof of Residency.

DIVISION	AGES
Major Division	11 to 12
Minor A Division	9 to 11
Minor B Division	7 to 8
Rookie Division	6 to 7
T-Ball Division	4 to 6

HIGHLAND YOUTH SOFTBALL RULES:

- **For T-Ball:** Players must turn age 5 by Jan. 1, 2010. Registration is \$50.
- **For Softball:** Players must be between 6 and 16 by Jan. 1. Registration is \$100.

SIGN-UP DATES

Saturday, Feb. 13 - Softball & Little League

- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Highland Middle School Cafeteria (enter on the north side of the building.)

Saturday, Feb. 20 - Softball & Little League

- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lincoln Center

Saturday, Feb. 27 - Youth Softball ONLY

- 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Lincoln Center

Wednesday, March 3 - Youth Softball ONLY

- 6 to 8 p.m. Lincoln Center


FOR MORE LITTLE LEAGUE INFO: Call HLL President Dan Vassar at (219) 924-1945 or email highlandlitttleleague@yahoo.com

FOR MORE YOUTH SOFTBALL INFO: Call HYSA President Joe Grzymalski at (219) 922-0645.

CRAFTERS WANTED

Highland Band Boosters are looking for crafters for the spring show -- Saturday and Sunday, March 12 and 13.

FOR MORE INFO: Email Frank Postulka at postulka@att.net.



NORTHWEST INDIANA SYMPHONY COMES TO TOWN

Classical music has found a home at Highland High School.

The Northwest Indiana Symphony has paired with the Highland Schools after determining the renovated auditorium was an ideal venue for its classical music series.

"We have been experimenting with various high schools to determine the best location for our classical concerts," said John Cain, executive director of South Shore Arts. "We have hosted concerts at high school auditoriums at Crown Point, Chesterton, Munster and now Highland."

"Highland has a great location -- near the interstate and close to some very nice restaurants -- and its auditorium has been available to us on Saturday nights, which has been a huge bonus for us," Cain said.

"Saturday performances give people the opportunity to go out to dinner before or after the concert and make more of an evening of it."

GET YOUR TICKETS NOW!

Saturday, Feb. 13 - 7:30 PM
Romantic Rhythms -- A perfect way to enjoy the St. Valentine's Day weekend.

Saturday, March 20 - 7:30 PM
War and Peace -- A multimedia presentation of the music of Chopin, featured in the movie, "The Pianist," as well as clips from the film.

FOR TICKETS: Tickets range in price from \$10 to \$60. Call (219) 836-0525 or visit www.nisorchestra.org.

The Highland auditorium has great acoustics and cozy atmosphere that gives concerts performed there something extra, he said.

"We have a 'Cookies with Kirk' after each performance and it has been really nice to have that event in Highland," Cain said.

"We felt very lucky to get into Highland and we are very happy to be there."

BEGINNING GUITAR LESSONS

Interested in learning the basics of guitar including chords, tablature and strumming? Students will learn songs ranging from Green Day to Beatles and Tom Petty to Madonna. Bring your own acoustic or electric guitar. Classes taught by HGS Music. Music provided.

AGES: 10 years and older

TIME: 10 a.m. Saturdays, March 20 to May 8

LOCATION: Lincoln Center

FEE: \$90 for residents/\$95 for nonresidents

TO REGISTER: Call the Parks & Recreation Department at (219) 838-0114.

DADDY/DAUGHTER DANCE

Highland residents come enjoy the music, dancing, raffle and refreshments. Music by Sensational Sounds. Fox Photography Pictures available for additional cost.

AGES: 5 to 13 years - Highland residents only

TIME: 7 to 9 p.m. Feb. 12

LOCATION: Lincoln Center

FEE: \$15 per couple (\$20 week of dance, no tickets sold on Friday of the dance); \$5 for each additional daughter (\$6 week of dance).

TO REGISTER: Call the Parks & Recreation Department at (219) 838-0114.